

Rare Animals of Louisiana



Glossy Ibis

Plegadis falcinellus

Rarity Rank: S2/G5

	1	2	3	4	5
State					
Global					
	imperiled		rare		secure



Photo by Jim Scarff

Identification:

- Dark wading bird with long down-curved bill
- During breeding season, adult plumage is rich chestnut with iridescent purple-green on the back, wings and head
- Facial skin (lore) dark blue, bordered above and below by thin line of light colored skin, which does not extend behind the eye
- Iris brown, bill gray, legs gray-brown
- In winter, loses most of chestnut feathering and are mostly metallic green with fine white streaking on head and neck; facial skin dull gray with pale blue border
- Adult length is 19 to 30 in and wingspread is up to 40 in

Habitat:

- Generally flocks can be found in marshes
- Nests in shrubs and trees near water

Food habits:

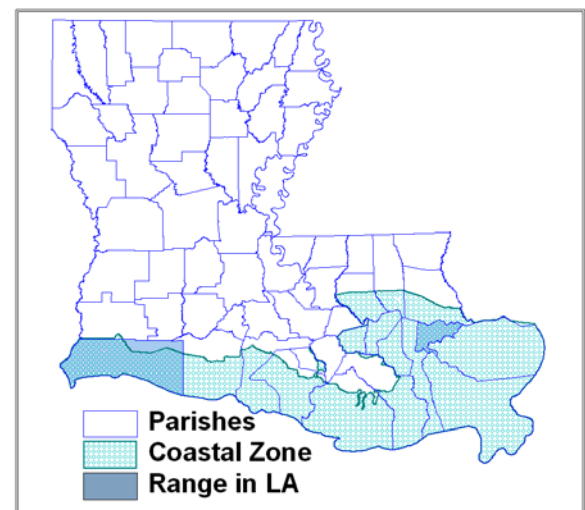
Feeds on crustaceans, small snakes, and insects

Range:

- Breeding Range: Nests locally throughout the Atlantic coast of U.S. and the Gulf Coast west to southeastern Louisiana; also West Indies, northern South America, and Old World
- Winters in southern portion of breeding range; in LA may be found throughout coastal region, but rare in western LA
- In Louisiana, known to nest on islands in the Mississippi River delta and Barataria Bay; total nesting population probably less than 200 pairs.

Reproduction:

- Nests are a dense platform of twigs or reed, often lined with leaves and other vegetation
- In Louisiana, nests are made of bulrush or grass
- Eggs are deep blue to greenish-blue in color which fades during incubation
- Clutch size of three to four eggs
- Brooding mostly by female, but both parents feed young



Range based on occurrences in Natural Heritage database

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Threats:

- Potentially sensitive to pesticides and oil spills
- Drainage of marshes, swamps and shallow lakes reduces habitat area
- Human disturbance
- Coastal land loss

Beneficial Management Practices:

- Creation of new habitat in the form of dredge-material islands
- Posting of buffer zones surrounding wading and nesting colonies
- Increased interest and education in wetlands protection programs

LA River Basins:

Pontchartrain, Mermentau, Calcasieu, Sabine

References:

Davis, W. E., Jr., and J. Kricher. 2000. Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*). In *The Birds of North America*, No. 545 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Birds of North America, Inc., Philadelphia, PA.